

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 00803 01 OF 02 181802Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2229

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 0803

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: OVIP (MONDALE, WALTER F.) IT, VT
SUBJECT: VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT'S VISIT TO VATICAN: BRIEFING
MEMORANDUM

1. U.S.-VATICANRELATIONS. THE PRESENT U.S.-VATICAN RELATIONSHIP IS UNIQUE. IT IS BASED ON TERMS OF REFERENCE AGREED TO BETWEEN THE WHITE HOUSE AND THE VATICAN. SUBSTITUTE SECRETARY OF STATE BENELLI IN 1969. THUS, SINCE 1970, THE USG HAS CONDUCTEDRELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN THROUGH THE PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL ENVOY, AMBASSADOR HENRY CABOT LODGE, WHO UNDERTAKES PERIODIC VISITS (23 THROUGH 1976) TO THE VATICAN TO CONFER WITH POPE PAUL VI AND VATICAN OFFICIALS. FOR CONTINUING LIAISON, THE SPECIAL ENVOY MAINTAINS A SMALL OFFICE IN ROME STAFFED BY A FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER AND SECRETARY. WE HAVE NO SUBSTANTIVE BILATERAL ISSUES WITH THE VATICAN.

2. BACKGROUND. POPE PAUL VI HAS SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED VATICAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CONFERENCES. THE VATICAN NOW HAS FORMAL DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH 87 COUNTRIES. IT HAS PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSIONS AT THE UNITED NATIONS, AT UNESCO AND AT SEVERAL OTHER UN-RELATED AGENCIES. THE VATICAN CITY-STATE IS A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION AND THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION. IN 1975 THE HOLY SEE WAS A SIGNATORY OF THE

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PAGE 02 ROME 00803 01 OF 02 181802Z

HELSINKI FINAL ACT AND IS PLANNING TO ATTEND THE JUNE 1977 BELGRADE CONFERENCE ON ITS IMPLEMENTATION. POPE PAUL, WHO HAS A LONG BACKGROUND IN VATICAN DIPLOMACY, SPEAKS FREQUENTLY ON MANY SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL ISSUES (E.G., ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT, MIDDLE-EAST, HUMAN RIGHTS, TERRORISM AND DRUG CONTROL).

3. SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL ISSUES OF VATICAN INTEREST. THE VATICAN HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY INTERESTED IN THE FOLLOWING INTERNATIONAL ISSUES:

A. EAST-WEST RELATIONS. POPE PAUL VI AND HIS FOREIGN MINISTER ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI, ARE STRONGLY DEVOTED TO VATICAN OSTOEPOLITIK, WHICH AIMS TO BRING ABOUT SOME MEASURE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM-NO MATTER HOW SMALL-IN THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. THEY HAVE THEREFORE VIEWED POSITIVELY IMPROVEMENTS IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND EXPRESSED SUPPORT OF WESTERN INITIATIVES. MOREOVER, THE VATICAN THROUGH ACTIVE DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS, HAS ATTEMPTED TO BREAK ITS OWN GROUND IN EAST EUROPE. DURING 1976, FOR EXAMPLE, VATICAN DIPLOMATS VISITED POLAND, ROMANIA, BULGARIA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY IN THE PURSUIT OF BETTER RELATIONS. IN 1975 THE POPE RECEIVED THE PRESIDENT OF BULGARIA, IN PRIVATE AUDIENCE AND CASAROLI VISITED EAST GERMANY. WITHIN THE CSCE CONTEXT, THE VATICAN NEGOTIATED WITH THE SOVIETS SPECIFIC LANGUAGE REGARDING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM WHICH WAS INCORPORATED IN THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. SINCE SIGNING OF THE ACT, THE VATICAN HAS CAREFULLY MONITORED ITS IMPLEMENTATION. "FOREIGN MINISTER" CASAROLI, WHILE ADMITTING THAT EAST EUROPE'S COMPLIANCE WAS ONLY MEASURABLE SO FAR, ADVISED SENATOR CLAIBORNE PELL IN NOVEMBER 1976 THAT THE WEST SHOULD AVOID CONFRONTATION AT BELGRADE.

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PAGE 01 ROME 00803 02 OF 02 181808Z
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SECRET SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 0803

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B. MIDDLE EAST PEACE. THE VATICAN HAS NOT FORMALLY RECOGNIZED THE STATE OF ISRAEL, HAS BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO PALESTINIAN RIGHTS TO A HOMELAND, AND HAS ENGAGED IN DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES FOR CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD, INCLUDING LIBYA. THE VATICAN HAS SUPPORTED THE UNITED STATES' POLICY OF STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH AND HAS PRAISED THE MODERATE POSITION OF

PRESIDENT SADAT OF EGYPT. IT HAS EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE FINAL STATUS OF JERUSALEM AND THE HOLY PLACES AND PREFERS INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES OR AN INTERNATIONAL STATUTE FOR REGULATING THE PRESENCE OF THE THREE RELIGIOUS GROUPS ON A BASIS UNDER WHICH "NO ONE IS A GUEST."

C. LEBANON. THE VATICAN HAS WORKED VIGOROUSLY FOR A TERMINATION OF THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR, PROVIDED CONSIDERABLE RELIEF AID, AND HAS APPEALED FOR INTERNATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE. THE VATICAN AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE CONSULTED FREQUENTLY ON THE PROBLEM AND SHARE THE OBJECTIVE OF PRESERVING THE SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON.

D. IBERIA. THE VATICAN FOR SOME YEARS NOW HAS SUPPORTED THE LIBERALIZATION PROCESS IN BOTH PORTUGAL AND SPAIN. WITH RESPECT TO PORTUGAL THE VATICAN SUPPORTED THE MODERATES DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD. IN THE MID-SEVENTIES THE VATICAN CONDEMNED FRANCO'S REPRESSION, CALLED FOR DEMOCRATIZATION, AND IN 1976 AGREED TO A FAR-REACHING REVISION OF THE SPANISH
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PAGE 02 ROME 00803 02 OF 02 181808Z

CONCORDAT, WHICH INTRODUCED MANY LIBERAL PROVISIONS IN CHURCH-STATE RELATIONS. THE POPE WILL RECEIVE KING JUAN CARLOS ON FEBRUARY 9.

E. ITALY END EUROCOMMUNISM. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE LARGE ELECTORAL GAINS OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS (PCI) IN 1975, THE VATICAN ADOPTED A STRONG ANTI-MARXIST LINE IN ITALY, STRESSING THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF CHRISTIANITY AND MARXIST ATHEISM. ALTHOUGH THE POLITICAL INFLUENCE OF THE VATICAN AND THE CHURCH IN ITALY HAS DIMINISHED SOMEWHAT, SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THEIR ACTIVITIES DURING THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OF 1975-1976 PERSUADED ABOUT 4-5 PERCENT OF THE ITALIAN ELECTORATE TO VOTE FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC). THE VATICAN, WHICH HAS A REALISTIC APPRECIATION OF THE PCI, FELT THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF A STRONG POSITION BY THE CHURCH, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A STAMPEDE TO THE COMMUNISTS IN THE JUNE 1976 ELECTIONS, AND THAT SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN INIMICAL TO ITS OWN INTERESTS AS WELL AS THE PRESERVATION OF A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY IN ITALY. THE PCI, HOWEVER, CONTINUES TO COURT THE VATICAN AND HAS ADOPTED MODERATE STANCES ON ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CHURCH (E.G., CONCORDAT) ON THE PREMISE THAT THE VATICAN'S BENEVOLENCE IS IMPORTANT IN GAINING PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE FOR A PCI ROLE IN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT. SINCE JUNE 1975, THE VATICAN HAS EXERTED PRESSURES FOR THE REFORM OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY
SO THAT IT CAN CONTINUE TO ACT AS A
STRONG COUNTERVAILING POWER TO THE PCI. VOLPE

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